Review of Seattle Channel Programming and Scheduling Practices

February 4, 2005

City Audit Team: Wendy K. Soo Hoo, Auditor-In-Charge
David Jones, Deputy City Auditor

City Auditor: Susan Cohen

Printed on Recycled Paper

City of Seattle

Office of City Auditor

Susan Cohen, City Auditor

February 4, 2005

The Honorable Greg Nickels
Seattle City Councilmembers
City of Seattle
Seattle, Washington 98104

Dear Mayor Nickels and City Councilmembers:

Attached is a report describing the results of our *Review of Seattle Channel Programming and Scheduling Practices.* We conducted this review to determine whether Seattle Channel's programming policies provided for a fair, unbiased presentation of City issues. Our analysis also identified the amount of airtime allocated to various types of programming. Finally, we analyzed Seattle Channel's strategy for broadcasting City Council meetings in response to a citizen's interest in obtaining more information on these broadcasts.

We appreciate the assistance and professionalism of all the Seattle Channel staff who participated in this review. If you have any questions, please call me at (206) 233-1093.

Sincerely,

Susan Cohen

Susan Cohen
City Auditor

SC:WSH

Attachment

700 FIFTH AVENUE, SUITE 2410, P.O. BOX 94729, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98124-4729
(206) 233-3801   FAX (206) 684-0900   www.seattle.gov/audit
An equal employment opportunity employer. Reasonable accommodations upon request.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Seattle Channel is an important resource for Seattle citizens interested in local issues and events. The Seattle Channel broadcasts information for the local community, including Seattle residents, public officials, and employees, via both a 24-hour cable channel and an interactive website (www.seattlechannel.org). The station broadcasts unedited City Council meetings, Mayoral press conferences, and a variety of general or community interest features. Seattle Channel also broadcasts 14 ongoing series about public affairs, City operations, and arts and culture in Seattle.

We conducted this review to determine whether Seattle Channel's programming policies provided for a fair, unbiased presentation of City issues. Our analysis also identified the amount of airtime allocated to various types of programming. Finally, we analyzed Seattle Channel's strategy for broadcasting City Council meetings in response to a citizen's interest in obtaining more information on these broadcasts.

RESULTS IN BRIEF

After reviewing Seattle Channel policies, broadcasted programs, and programming data, we determined that:

- Seattle Channel established programming policies to ensure that its programs are fair and objective. Although Seattle Channel has not documented its procedures for ensuring adherence to programming policies, our review of Seattle Channel's practices as well as six programs focusing on two significant local issues indicated that Seattle Channel provided a balanced representation of differing viewpoints.

- Programming during the prime viewing hours (which Seattle Channel management defined as the period between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.) emphasized culture, arts, and history programs in 2003, and general interest programs and public service announcements in 2004, based on our analysis of samples of Seattle Channel programming data. The largest percentages of total sample airtime were allocated to live and taped broadcasts of City Council meetings in both 2003 and 2004.

- City Council meetings held during the audit sample period were broadcasted live, and were generally replayed within 24 to 48 hours at varying times to provide convenient access for viewers.

We recommend that Seattle Channel consider documenting its procedures for providing assurance that programming is fair and objective. We also recommend that Seattle Channel consider conducting periodic viewer surveys or focus groups, as resources permit, to obtain detailed feedback on programming and scheduling.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Our review focused on Seattle Channel programming from January 2003 through April 2004. Our methodology included:

- Interviewing Seattle Channel and Department of Information Technology managers and staff, as well as members of the Citizens' Telecommunications and Technology Advisory Board;

- Reviewing Seattle Channel policies and procedures;

- Conducting a survey of five other local government cable channels to obtain comparative information and identify best practices in local government access television;

- Assessing the fairness and objectivity of six Seattle Channel programs covering two significant local issues;

- Analyzing 2003 and 2004 sample programming data to identify programming trends and to determine the distribution of Seattle Channel airtime; and

- Analyzing the results of a 2004 Department of Information Technology *Information Technology Residential Survey*, conducted to obtain feedback from Seattle residents on technology issues and services, including Seattle Channel programs.

This study was conducted in accordance with the standards for the professional practice of internal auditing. Our fieldwork was conducted between February and July 2004.

CHAPTER 2: SEATTLE CHANNEL PROGRAMMING REVIEW

The Seattle Channel is a government access cable channel and website operated by the City of Seattle to inform citizens about City issues and services, and to involve citizens in government and community affairs. The objectives of the Seattle Channel are to:

- Use its facilities to foster an informed and active citizenry, by reflecting the activities of City government, as well as Seattle communities and culture;

- Create two-way communication between City government and Seattle citizens by producing programming that informs, educates, and encourages participation in government activities and decision-making;

- Encourage debate, discussion, and a diversity of viewpoints on local issues, and to support programs and events that might not otherwise be available to Seattle citizens;

- Consider the interests and concerns of ethnic minorities and other special audiences, and to make a concerted effort to bring the views and interests of these groups into Seattle Channel programming; and

- Serve as a forum for ongoing dialogue on public policy issues related to City government services and programs.

HISTORY OF MUNICIPAL CABLE TELEVISION IN SEATTLE

Until 1997, the Seattle Public Library operated Seattle Municipal Television (Channel 28), which broadcasted a limited number of unedited City Council meetings and was staffed by 1.3 full-time equivalent positions. Seattle City Light and the Engineering, Water, and Police Departments also dedicated funding, staff, and equipment to produce videos for use within their own departments. In 1997, the City's video equipment and staff were consolidated and the responsibility for operating the channel was transferred to the unit responsible for maintaining the City's website, which is now located in the Department of Information Technology.[1] This new unit was charged with improving the quality and content of programming on the City's municipal cable channel, then known as TVSea. TVSea broadcasted City Council meetings, and also began producing and broadcasting programs on City policies and services, such as a live, call-in show on domestic violence, a feature exploring the City's off-leash area policy, and a regular call-in program with Seattle Police Department officials.

During 2001, the Mayor and a Councilmember established the Seattle Commission on Electronic Communications to develop a vision and direction for the City's television station and website to increase public awareness, citizen understanding and participation in government, community and cultural affairs. In December 2001, the Commission issued recommendations to transform "TVSea into a multimedia organization that provides compelling content and two-way communication opportunities." The following year, the unit began implementing the Commission's recommendations by changing the station's name to the Seattle Channel and establishing a coordinated, interactive website, www.seattlechannel.org. The new multimedia

---

[1]Seattle Police Department video production staff was not included in the consolidation.

approach was designed to provide greater access to information on City programs and community issues, and to facilitate Seattle residents' interaction with City government.

CURRENT SEATTLE CHANNEL OPERATIONS

The Seattle Channel is currently housed within the Department of Information Technology's Office of Electronic Communications. A General Manager, with a staff of 13 full-time equivalents, oversees Seattle Channel television and website operations. The Seattle Channel's 2004 budget is $1.76 million. Revenues for Seattle Channel operations come primarily from the City's cable franchise fee, with some additional revenue from video production service fees and utility fees.

The Seattle Channel televises more than 200 City Council meetings and more than 50 Mayoral press conferences each year. The Seattle Channel also produces a variety of serial programs and special features, including:

- "Ask the Mayor": Live, monthly telephone call-in show with the Mayor;
- "City Inside/Out": Weekly review of news affecting the City of Seattle;
- "City A-Go-Go": Weekly program on the local arts community and events;
- "CityStream": Weekly program on issues of concern to Seattle residents;
- "Council Conversations": Series of informal interviews with individual Councilmembers;
- "Looking for City Hall": Documentary on the history of Seattle's City Halls;
- "Seattle Spotlight": Series covering various topics such as the Alaskan Way Viaduct and South Lake Union development; and
- "Student Voices": Four-part series featuring students and City officials discussing issues that concern Seattle's youth.

Seattle Channel has been recognized nationally for its programming. In 2004, the Northwest Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences nominated Seattle Channel programs for four Regional Emmy Awards: "Looking for City Hall" (Cultural/Historical Documentary); "The Vera Project" (Informational Children and Youth Program); "On the Ballot: Latte Tax" (Public Affairs Segment); and "City Stream #27" (Public Affairs Special or Series).

Seattle Channel Scheduling and Programming Decisions

Seattle Channel management independently makes programming and scheduling decisions, and determines the content of programs. Seattle Channel's General Manager, Content Manager, and Operations Manager regularly meet to discuss scheduling, ideas for new programs, and topics for ongoing series.

A survey of five other local government television stations (Charlotte, North Carolina; Denver, Colorado; San Diego, California; Santa Monica, California; and Tucson, Arizona) showed that the stations' independence varied. Only the station management for Denver 8 TV made programming and scheduling decisions independently. In contrast, Tucson's City Manager, Chief Information Officer, and the television station's Program Manager made joint decisions

regarding major program commitments. In San Diego, CityTV 24's policies stated that all program content was subject to approval by the City Manager. In Santa Monica and Charlotte, station management made decisions regarding station operations with input from their city managers' offices.

Seattle Channel Website

In addition to producing and broadcasting television programs, Seattle Channel also maintains an award winning, coordinated, interactive website.[2] Seattle Channel broadcasts television promotions to encourage viewers to visit the website for scheduling information, news updates, a weekly viewer poll, and to discuss programs and local issues with other viewers in the online Talkback forum. Seattle Channel's multimedia approach to engaging the community in City and community issues is known as the City's Democracy Portal.

The Seattle Channel website also offers live 24-hour web streaming, dedicated City Council streaming, and an online archive of more than 1,200 Seattle Channel programs produced since 1999. The online archive contains special features, documentaries, and serial programs in the current broadcast rotation. The online archive also offers access to all City Council meetings that occurred during the previous six months. Since 2003, Seattle Channel has indexed the online Council meeting videos, allowing visitors to watch specific segments without having to view the entire meeting.

A review of five other local government stations' websites showed that only two of the five stations (San Diego's CityTV 24 and Tucson 12) offered live web streaming or online video archives. However, neither station maintained an inventory of online videos that was as extensive as the Seattle Channel's archive. San Diego's CityTV 24 online archive only included City Council meetings from the previous two months. Although Tucson 12's website offered an online archive of broadcasted serial programs and special features in addition to City Council meetings, the selection was limited to 65 videos.

**Seattle Channel Audience and Online Visitors**

According to survey results and statistics from the Department of Information Technology, the Seattle Channel's television audience and website visits have increased during the past several years. In 2000 and 2004, the Department of Information Technology retained consultants to administer an *Information Technology Residential Survey* of Seattle residents during the cable franchise renewal process. The 2004 survey showed that more than half (56 percent) of all respondents had watched Seattle Channel. An even greater percentage (69 percent) of cable subscribers had watched Seattle Channel, which represented a statistically significant increase from the 57 percent of cable subscribers who had seen Seattle Channel in 2000.

As shown in Exhibit 1 below, the 2004 survey results also indicated that cable subscribers who had seen the Seattle Channel watched it more often than those participating in the 2000 study. Although only half watched Seattle Channel regularly, cable subscribers who watched between

---

[2]Seattle Channel's website received the Best City Government Application Award from the Center for Digital Government in 2003.

once a week and once a month nearly doubled from 10 percent in 2000 to 19 percent in 2004, and subscribers who watched at least once a week rose slightly from 21 percent to 22 percent.

EXHIBIT 1
SEATTLE CHANNEL VIEWING FREQUENCY AMONG
CABLE TELEVISION SUBSCRIBERS IN 2000 AND 2004
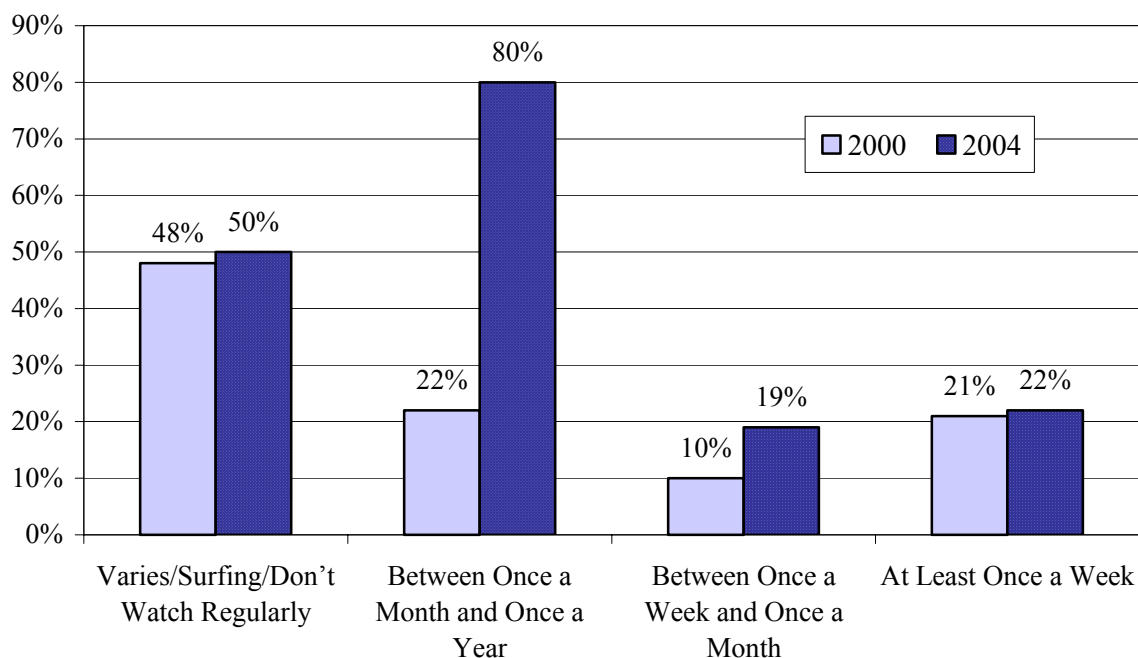
Use of the Seattle Channel website has also increased significantly since it was launched in October 2002. From November 2002 to February 2004, the average number of website visits grew from 558 to 4,832 visits per day. Ten (10) percent of the visitors in February 2004 watched either live streaming videos or videos from the online archive, and the average visit lasted more than 8 minutes.

FINDING 1: **Seattle Channel has established informal procedures for ensuring adherence to station policies on fairness and objectivity. Our review of Seattle Channel practices as well as six programs focusing on two significant local issues indicated that the station provided a balanced representation of differing viewpoints.**

Seattle Channel has established clear policies on balanced programming. Seattle Channel policies state that "maximum objectivity is one of [the station's] most important goals," and "every attempt will be made to provide all significant parties to a controversy an opportunity to participate in public affairs programming." The policies further specify that:

- Commentary, points of view, or opinion will be identified as such;
- Seattle Channel reporters and producers will not express personal opinions on public affairs matters;
- Seattle Channel will air programs that contain a fair and accurate representation of facts;

- Fairness and balance will always be the Seattle Channel's objective in public affairs programming, but there will be occasions when fairness and balance must be achieved over time, rather than in a single program; and
- In those instances where it is impossible to give adequate attention to differing sides on one given program, every effort will be made to present these points of view on subsequent programs.

The Seattle Channel General Manager and Content Manager indicated that they have established practices to provide reasonable assurance that broadcasted programs adhere to station policies on fairness, objectivity, and balance. These practices include: conducting weekly meetings with reporters to discuss upcoming program topics, the significant parties involved, and individuals the reporter should interview; reviewing all programs prior to broadcast; regularly monitoring viewer feedback; and frequently assessing significant ongoing issues, including identifying new viewpoints and discussing past coverage at Seattle Channel management meetings.

Seattle Channel management has not documented its procedures or decisions made as a result of these practices, so we could not determine whether management consistently adhered to its procedures. However, we reviewed six Seattle Channel programs produced and broadcasted during 2003 and 2004, and concluded that the sample programming was fair and balanced.

To assess the fairness, objectivity, and balance of Seattle Channel's programming, we analyzed recent coverage of two controversial issues: the Seattle monorail and the Magnuson Park master plan. We reviewed six programs, four focusing on the Seattle monorail and two focusing on Magnuson Park. The sample included three episodes of "City Inside/Out," Seattle Channel's weekly news, information, and opinion program; two episodes of "CityStream," a weekly series on life in Seattle; and one episode of "Seattle Spotlight," a series of short features highlighting Seattle's current issues.

We selected programs with summaries on Seattle Channel's website that indicated in-depth discussion or debate on Magnuson Park and monorail issues. One exception was the May 21, 2004 episode of "City Inside/Out," which included information on the monorail in the show's news update segment rather than during its interview segment. We primarily focused on Seattle Channel programs from 2004, with the exception of the October 2, 2003 "CityStream," focusing on the potential monorail route through Seattle Center. This program was the only episode of "CityStream" that covered monorail issues.

We evaluated the six programs using three specific criteria consistent with Seattle Channel's policies. Specifically, we observed whether: (1) producers or program hosts refrained from expressing personal opinions; (2) Seattle Channel provided opportunities to all significant parties to participate; and (3) Seattle Channel provided significant parties opportunities to participate on other programs if their views were not included in a particular show. Our conclusions are summarized in Exhibit 2 below.

<table>

| | Criteria for Assessing Fairness and Objectivity | | |
</table>

EXHIBIT 2
FAIRNESS AND OBJECTIVITY OF SAMPLE PROGRAMS

Programs	Criterion 1: No Personal Opinions Expressed	Criterion 2: All Significant Parties Represented	Criterion 3: Opportunities on Subsequent Programs for Views Not Shown
"CityStream" (October 2, 2003) Topic: Monorail's proposed Seattle Center route	Reporter did not express personal opinion.	Yes	Not applicable
"City Inside/Out" (April 2, 2004) Topic: Monorail plan	Reporter did not express personal opinion.	No[a]	Yes[a]
"City Inside/Out" (May 21, 2004) News: Monorail	Reporter did not express personal opinion.	Yes	Not applicable
"Seattle Spotlight" (June 2004) Topic: Monorail criticism	Reporter did not express personal opinion.	Yes	Not applicable
"CityStream" (January 28, 2004) Topic: Magnuson Park	Reporter did not express personal opinion.	Yes	Not applicable
"City Inside/Out" (April 16, 2004) Topic: Magnuson Park	Reporter did not express personal opinion.	Yes	Not applicable

Note[a]: The reporter asked two panels (comprised of journalists and Monorail Board members) for opinions on criticism of the monorail, but neither panel included representatives from anti-monorail organizations. Because a subsequent program focused on criticism of the monorail, we concluded that Seattle Channel met the third criterion.
Source: Office of City Auditor Audit Fairness and Objectivity Analysis, June 2004.

Overall, the Seattle Channel provided fair and balanced programming on Magnuson Park and the monorail, and Seattle Channel reporters did not exhibit any apparent biases or indicate their personal opinions. One episode of "City Inside/Out" (April 2, 2004) included discussions about the proposed monorail plan with two panels that included two local journalists and two Monorail Board members. Although the focus of the discussions was on the proposed plan, the reporter asked both panels to discuss criticisms of the monorail. No representatives from anti-monorail organizations were interviewed, so these organizations did not have an opportunity to respond. However, the composition of the panels seemed reasonable given the program's overall focus on the proposed monorail plan and the plan review process, rather than on the pros and cons of the monorail system. Furthermore, because a subsequent "Seattle Spotlight" episode focused on criticism of the monorail, we concluded that Seattle Channel met the third criterion to provide significant parties opportunities to participate on other programs if their viewpoints were not included in a particular show.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. We recommend that Seattle Channel document its procedures for providing assurance that programming is fair and objective.

FINDING 2: **Seattle Channel allocated the largest percentages of sample airtime during prime viewing hours (6 p.m. to 8 p.m.) to cultural, historical, and arts programs in 2003 and general interest programs and public service announcements in 2004. Seattle Channel allocated the largest percentages of overall airtime to live and taped broadcasts of City Council meetings.**

To estimate the amount of airtime allocated to various types of programming, we randomly selected 10 days of programming from 2003 and also analyzed two 14-day periods of 2004 programming. (The block sampling methodology for 2004 programming facilitated an analysis of the timing and frequency of City Council meeting broadcasts on Seattle Channel. The results of this analysis are described on page 14.)

Based on program descriptions and consultation with the Seattle Channel's Content Manager, we assigned each program to one of nine categories. (Refer to Appendix 1 for examples of programs assigned to each category.) The nine categories included:

*   City Council Meetings—City Council briefings and meetings, public hearings, Council forums, and Council committee meetings;
*   City Council Features—Serial or special programs focusing on the City Council;
*   Culture, Arts, and History—Serial or special programs and documentaries focusing on local artists or cultural or historical events;
*   General Interest—Shows with broad appeal, such as general information on sexual assault or the West Nile Virus and other brief public service announcements;
*   Mayor Features—Live programs and other special features focusing on the Mayor;
*   Mayor Press Conferences—Press briefings and announcements initiated by the Mayor;
*   Neighborhood and Community—Programs featuring a particular neighborhood or focusing on neighborhood issues;
*   Public Affairs and Other City Programs—Programs focusing on public affairs, local government, and City news, services, or events; and
*   Other Public Meetings—Meetings of other local public agencies, such as the Seattle Monorail Board or Sound Transit Board.

Programming During Prime Viewing Hours Emphasized Culture, Arts, and History Programs in 2003 and General Interest Programs in 2004.

Our analysis identified which program categories were allocated the most airtime during the following segments of the day: Morning (6 a.m. to 12 p.m.); Afternoon (12 p.m. to 6 p.m.); Prime Viewing Hours (6 p.m. to 8 p.m., after the normal business day ends and before the major network prime time begins, defined based on consultation with Seattle Channel management);
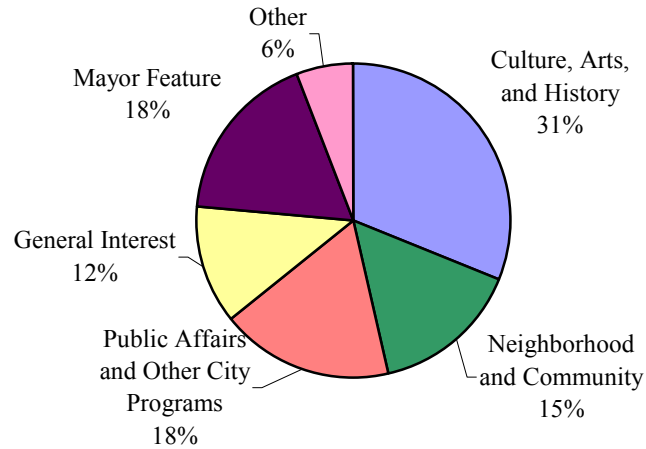
Evening (8 p.m. to 11 p.m.); and Overnight (11 p.m. to 6 a.m.). Exhibit 3 below displays the types of programming that comprised the largest share of sample airtime for each time period.

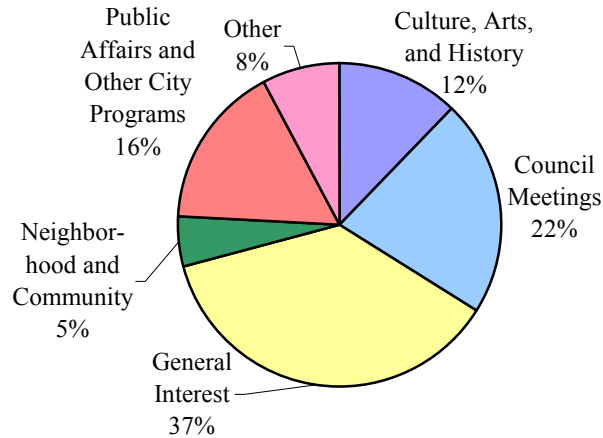| EXHIBIT 3 LARGEST SHARE OF AIRTIME FOR EACH TIME PERIOD				
	Largest Share in 2003		**Largest Share in 2004**	
Morning	Council Meetings	43%	Council Meetings	34%
Afternoon	Council Meetings	42%	Council Meetings	34%
Prime Viewing Hours	Culture, Arts, and History	31%	General Interest	37%
Evening	Culture, Arts, and History	30%	Council Meetings	30%
Overnight	Culture, Arts, and History	24%	General Interest	23%
Source: Seattle Channel Programming Data Samples for 2003 and 2004.				

As shown above, Council Meetings comprised the largest shares of airtime in the Morning and Afternoon in 2003, and Culture, Arts, and History programs were allocated the largest shares during the Prime Viewing Hours, Evening, and Overnight time periods. In 2004, Council Meetings again were allocated the largest shares of sample airtime during the Morning and Afternoon, as well as in the Evening. General Interest programs received the largest share of sample airtime during Prime Viewing Hours and the Overnight time period in 2004.

Exhibit 4 below displays the sample airtime distributions for the Prime Viewing Hours in 2003 and 2004. (Airtime distributions for the other time categories are shown in Appendix 2.) We focused on programming during Prime Viewing Hours because Seattle Channel management believes that viewers are most likely to watch Seattle Channel between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. after the normal business day ends and before popular major network programming begins.

EXHIBIT 4
2003 PRIME VIEWING HOURS SAMPLE AIRTIME DISTRIBUTION

Other 6%
Mayor Feature 18%
Culture, Arts, and History 31%
General Interest 12%
Public Affairs and Other City Programs 18%
Neighborhood and Community 15%

2004 PRIME VIEWING HOURS SAMPLE AIRTIME DISTRIBUTION

Public Affairs and Other City Programs 16%
Other 8%
Culture, Arts, and History 12%
Council Meetings 22%
Neighbor-hood and Community 5%
General Interest 37%

The analysis showed that programming during Prime Viewing Hours emphasized Culture, Arts, and History programs (31 percent) during 2003 and General Interest programs (37 percent) during 2004. Although no City Council meetings aired during Prime Viewing Hours in the 2003 sample, Seattle Channel allocated approximately 22 percent of the sample airtime during Prime Viewing Hours to City Council meetings in 2004. In contrast, the sample airtime during Prime Viewing Hours allocated to Mayor Features declined from 18 percent in 2003 to 2 percent in 2004. Seattle Channel's Content Manager indicated that this may be due to reduced broadcasts of a 2003 "Day With the Mayor" program, and because fewer "Mayor's Neighborhood Walk" features were produced in 2004. This category did not include programs that focused on departments overseen by the Mayor's Office, such as Seattle City Light and Seattle Public Utilities. These programs were included in the Public Affairs and Other City Programs category, which were allocated substantial sample airtime during Prime Viewing Hours in both 2003 and 2004 (18 percent and 16 percent respectively). The Public Affairs and Other City Programs category also included "City Inside/Out," a weekly review of City and community news, and "Seattle Spotlight," a series of features focusing on significant local issues.
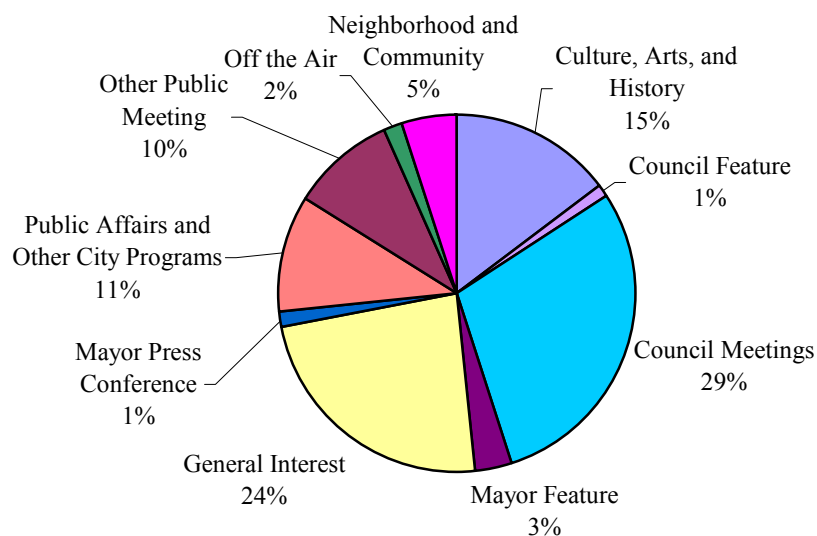
The Largest Percentages of Total Sample Airtime Were Allocated to City Council Meetings in 2003 and 2004.

Exhibit 5 below shows the amount of total airtime allocated to each of the nine program categories based on the samples selected for 2003 and 2004.

EXHIBIT 5
2003 SEATTLE CHANNEL SAMPLE PROGRAMMING DISTRIBUTION
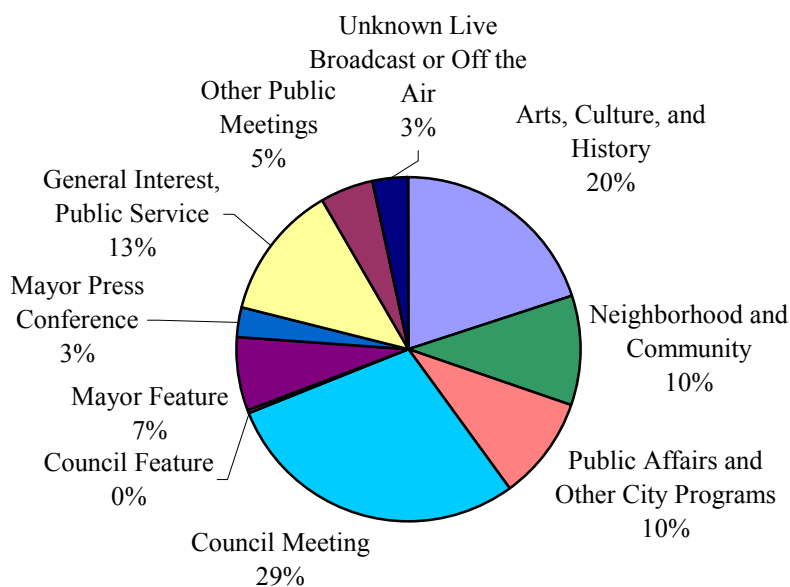
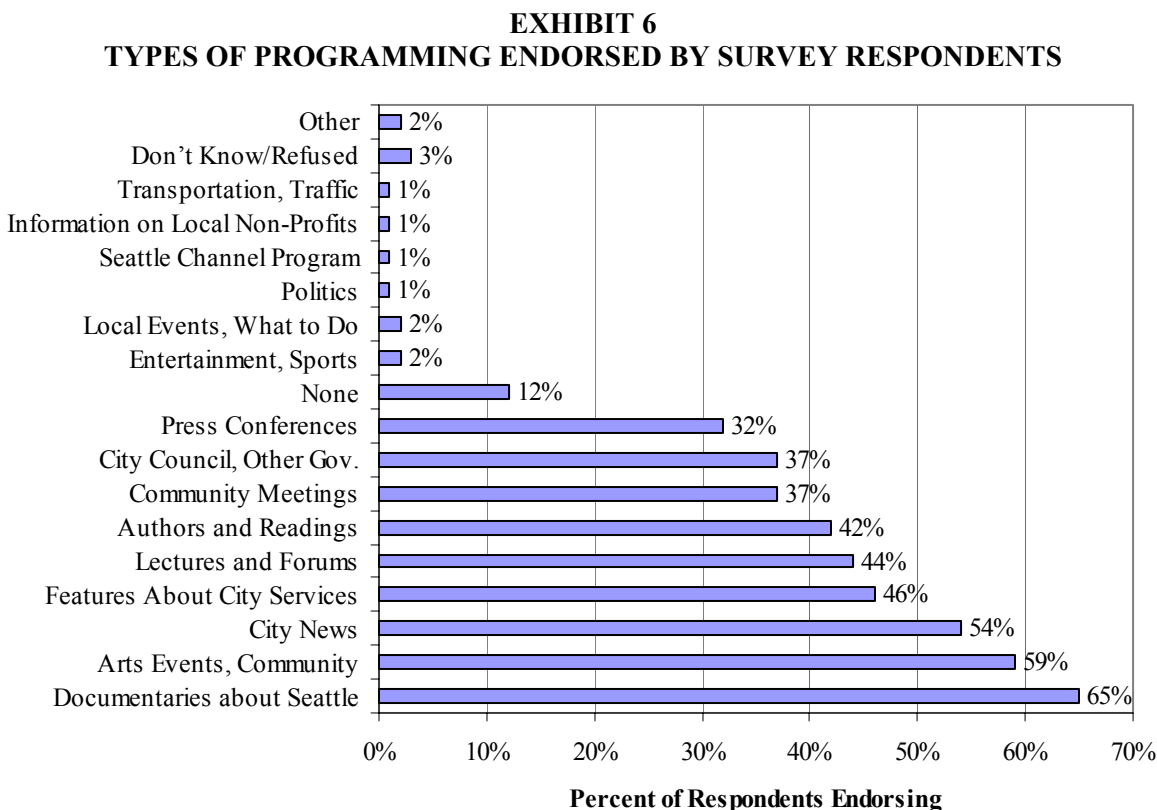**2004 SEATTLE CHANNEL SAMPLE PROGRAMMING DISTRIBUTION**

As shown above, the largest percentages of total airtime in both 2003 and 2004 were allocated to City Council meetings (approximately 29 percent in both years). The second largest percentages were allocated to Culture, Arts, and History programming (20 percent) in 2003 and General

Interest programming (24 percent) in 2004. Shows focusing on Public Affairs and Other City Policies (i.e., programs on local government issues, not including Council meetings or features, or Mayoral press conferences or features) were allocated 10 percent of the sample airtime in 2003 and 11 percent in 2004. Few categories' airtime shares changed substantially, although Culture, Arts, and History programming declined from 20 percent of the sample airtime in 2003 to 15 percent in 2004, and General Interest programming increased from 13 percent in 2003 to 24 percent in 2004.

Seattle Channel's Airtime Allocations Were Consistent With Programming Endorsed by Respondents in the *Information Technology Residential Survey*

The Seattle Channel's airtime allocations were consistent with the types of programming endorsed by respondents in the Department of Information Technology 2004 *Information Technology Residential Survey*. Respondents were asked what types of programming would encourage them to watch the Seattle Channel or watch it more often. Exhibit 6 below displays the percentage of respondents endorsing each type of programming.

EXHIBIT 6
TYPES OF PROGRAMMING ENDORSED BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Type	Percent
Other	2%
Don't Know/Refused	3%
Transportation, Traffic	1%
Information on Local Non-Profits	1%
Seattle Channel Program	1%
Politics	1%
Local Events, What to Do	2%
Entertainment, Sports	2%
None	12%
Press Conferences	32%
City Council, Other Gov.	37%
Community Meetings	37%
Authors and Readings	42%
Lectures and Forums	44%
Features About City Services	46%
City News	54%
Arts Events, Community	59%
Documentaries about Seattle	65%

Percent of Respondents Endorsing

Note: Respondents could endorse more than one type of programming.
Source: Department of Information Technology, *Information Technology Residential Survey*, 2004.

A high level of interest was indicated for documentaries about Seattle, arts and community events, and City news, with more than half of the survey respondents endorsing these programming options. These results support the Seattle Channel's substantial allocations of overall airtime and airtime during prime viewing hours to the Culture, Arts, and History program

category, which included documentaries on local issues and coverage of festivals, and to the Public Affairs and Other City Programs category, which included series and special features on City news and services. Seattle Channel's airtime allocations were also consistent with the Seattle Commission on Electronic Communications' recommendations in 2001 to:

- Explore complex issues in an interesting and captivating manner, highlighting the range of citizens' knowledge and opinions about them;

- Cover events and forums that are not broadcast on commercial stations or websites, such as the City Club, Town Hall, Seattle Center performances, or library events;

- Work with City departments to help them develop content that is informative and interesting and uses a format appropriate to their programming goal and message;

- Make the business of government more tangible and understandable for citizens—show more informal discussions, "Day in the Life" programs, call-in shows, top 10 questions from citizens, or backstage at Bumbershoot;

- Produce a "News of the Week" or "Seattle Week in Review" program that provides a recap of City Council actions and other cultural and civic events and happenings in the City; and

- Continue producing pieces on Seattle history.

Although the *Information Technology Residential Survey* results provide some information on viewer interests, Seattle Channel could obtain additional feedback and more specific information by conducting in-depth surveys that focus on the station's operations (rather than all cable services). Focus groups could also be conducted to inform programming and scheduling decisions.

RECOMMENDATION:

2. We recommend that Seattle Channel consider conducting periodic viewer surveys or focus groups, as resources permit, to obtain detailed feedback on programming and scheduling.

FINDING 3: City Council meetings were generally replayed within 24 to 48 hours of the live meeting and at varying times to provide convenient access for viewers.

As noted previously, the 2004 sample consisted of two 14-day periods to facilitate our additional analysis of how many times each Council meeting was broadcasted, and how promptly they were broadcasted following the actual meeting.[3] We conducted this analysis in response to a citizen's interest in obtaining more information on Seattle Channel's strategy for broadcasting City Council meetings.

---

[3]The two-week sample periods were January 21 through February 3, 2004 and March 29 through April 11, 2004. The analysis considered only the Council meetings that occurred during the first week of each two-week sample period. The meetings that occurred during the second week of each two-week sample were not included because of the limited opportunities for replayed broadcasts towards the end of the sample period.

All 12 Council meetings considered in the analysis were broadcasted live on Seattle Channel. We found that 9 (75 percent) of the 12 Council meetings held during the sample periods were replayed within 24 hours of the original meeting, and 11 (92 percent) were replayed within 48 hours.[4] The taped Council meetings were replayed between 2 and 10 times during varying time periods to provide convenient access for interested viewers. The most frequently replayed Council meetings were the April 1st Committee of the Whole on the monorail design guidelines (replayed 10 times) and the January 22nd Committee of the Whole on the Mayor's nominee for the City Light Superintendent position (replayed 7 times), two issues that received significant public attention. We concluded that Seattle Channel broadcasted taped Council meetings promptly, and frequently replayed the meetings that covered topics with a high level of public interest.

RECOMMENDATION:

None.

---

[4]The only Council meeting that did not air within 48 hours of the original broadcast was the March 30, 2004 Housing, Human Services, and Health Committee public hearing on the Human Services Department Strategic Investment Plan. The taped public hearing was subsequently broadcasted on April 3rd and again on April 5th.

Culture, Arts, and History Programs

- 2004 Martin Luther King Day Celebration
- A Biography of Bruce Lee
- Artists Express
- ArtsLink
- Black History Month Presents: Sojourner Truth
- Celebrate Diversity
- Celebrating Our Olmsted Centennial
- Celebrating the Seattle Symphony's 100th Anniversary
- Cine-Visions
- City A Go-Go
- Creating Change: Art in Prison
- Experience Music Project: Experience This!
- Festival Sundiata
- Golden Umbrella Awards
- History Link: Ballard
- History of the Frye

- Lessons from the Past: The Lost Elshin Murals
- Living Literature: Langston Hughes
- Looking for City Hall
- Maafa Suite
- New Voices - Fire in the Arts
- Norway Days
- Playing Hardball: A Look at Title IX
- Ridin' the Bus
- Seattle: Portrait of a Young City
- Seattle's Endangered Instruments
- Singing Stones: A Tribute to Cesar Chavez
- Tet Festival: Celebrating Vietnamese Lunar New Year
- The Seattle Shakespeare Festival
- The Vera Project
- Tuskegee Airmen
- Washington Women in Trades: Six "Rosies"

City Council Features

- Council Community Days: South Park and Southwest Seattle Tour
- Student Voices with Council President Drago

- Council Conversations Series

City Council Meetings

- Committee of the Whole of 3-22-04: Monorail
- Committee of the Whole of 4-5-04: Viaduct/Seawall
- Committee of the Whole of 1-22-04: City Light Superintendent
- Council Briefing of 1-20-04

- Council Forum of 3-16-04: Canadian Prescription Drugs
- Finance and Budget Committee of 4-7-04
- Full Council Meeting of 1-26-04
- Public Hearing of 1-20-04: City Light Superintendent

General Interest

- 21st Century Education
- American Red Cross Everyday Heroes: Firefighter
- Don't Borrow Trouble
- Fair Housing (31 seconds)
- Fair Housing Spanish (61 seconds)
- Fair Housing Spanish (30 seconds)
- Identity Theft Symposium

- Project Impact: Earthquake Hazards in the Northwest
- Project Impact: Homeland Security
- Parenting 103: The Road to Independence
- Party Food Safety Public Service Announcement
- Seattle Voices
- Sexual Assault Public Service Announcement: Cambodian, Russian, Vietnamese, and Somali Languages
- West Nile Virus Public Service Announcement

APPENDIX 1
EXAMPLES OF SEATTLE CHANNEL PROGRAMS BY CATEGORY

Mayor Features

- A Day with the Mayor
- Ask the Mayor
- Mayor Neighborhood Walk: Olympic Hills
- Mayor's Honor Song
- Spotlight: Mayor's Mid-Term Report Card
- Student Voices with Mayor Nickels

Mayor Press Conferences

- Mayor Press Conference: Families & Education Levy Renewal Proposal
- Mayor Press Conference Bataan Street Legislation Signing
- Mayor Press Conference: Family Leave Benefits
- Mayor Press Conference: National Governor's Association
- Mayor's Press Conference: New City Light Superintendent

Neighborhood and Community

- An Evening with Gordon Price: Thinking Boldly About the Future
- Blue Moon People
- City Club "Ending Homelessness"
- City Club: An Evening with Robert Putman
- Just Like Noah
- Neighborhood News Lake City
- Neighborhood News Central District
- Neighborhood News Lake City and U- District
- Neighborhood News Southeast
- Rainier Valley Portraits
- Seattle Public Schools Global Reading Challenge!
- Spotlight: Waterfront
- The Park as a Window
- Town Hall Forum - Seattle 360: Seattle Public Schools at the Crossroads
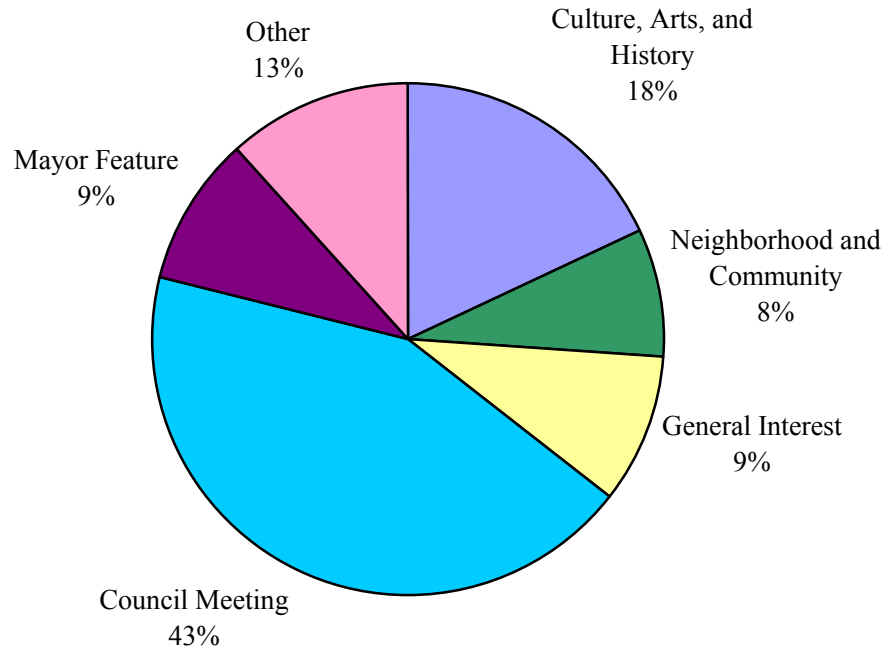
Public Affairs and Other City Programs

- An Inside Look at Seattle's Swing Bridge
- City Inside/Out
- CityClub: 2004 Legislative Preview
- CityStream
- Film Office Public Service Announcement
- History of Seattle City Light
- Inside the Carkeek Park Environmental Learning Center
- Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens
- McCaw Hall - Building the Great Hall
- Seattle City Light Electric Vehicles
- Seattle City Light Green Power Program 2004
- Seattle Human Services: Creating Opportunity, Investing in Community
- Seattle Public Utilities Presents: Go Blue to Recycle
- Spotlight: Viaduct, Seawall, Skagit Update
- Student Voices with Chief Kerlikowske
- Waterfront Planning Forum
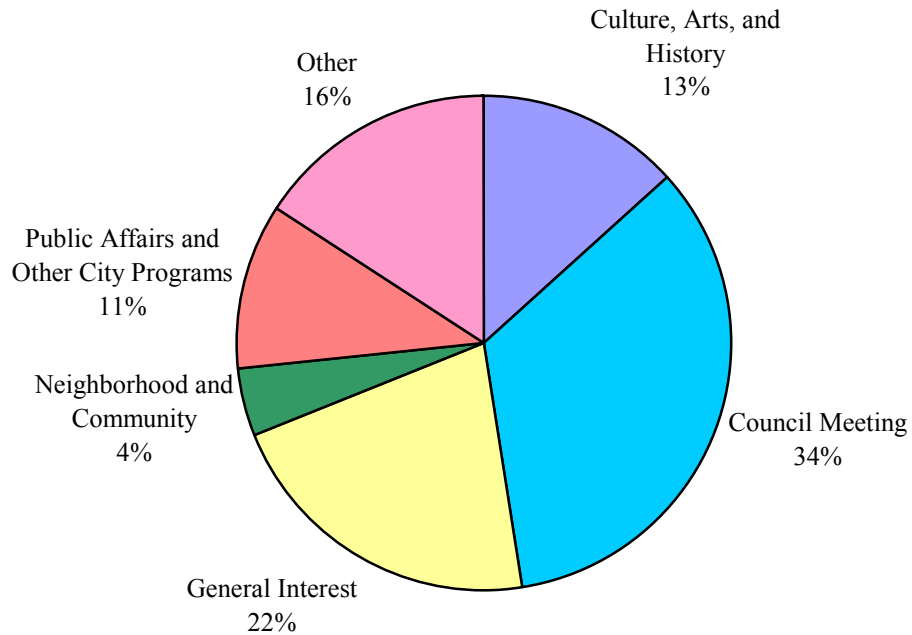
Other Public Agency Meetings

- Monorail Board Meeting 1-24-04
- Seattle Library Board Meeting 3-16-04
- Sound Transit Board Meeting - January

APPENDIX 2
DISTRIBUTION OF 2003 AND 2004 SAMPLE AIRTIME FOR EACH TIME PERIOD

2003 MORNING SAMPLE AIRTIME DISTRIBUTION

Other
13%

Culture, Arts, and
History
18%

Mayor Feature
9%

Neighborhood and
Community
8%

General Interest
9%

Council Meeting
43%

2004 MORNING SAMPLE AIRTIME DISTRIBUTION

Other
16%

Culture, Arts, and
History
13%

Public Affairs and
Other City Programs
11%

Neighborhood and
Community
4%

Council Meeting
34%

General Interest
22%

APPENDIX 2
DISTRIBUTION OF 2003 AND 2004 SAMPLE AIRTIME FOR EACH TIME PERIOD

2003 AFTERNOON SAMPLE AIRTIME DISTRIBUTION
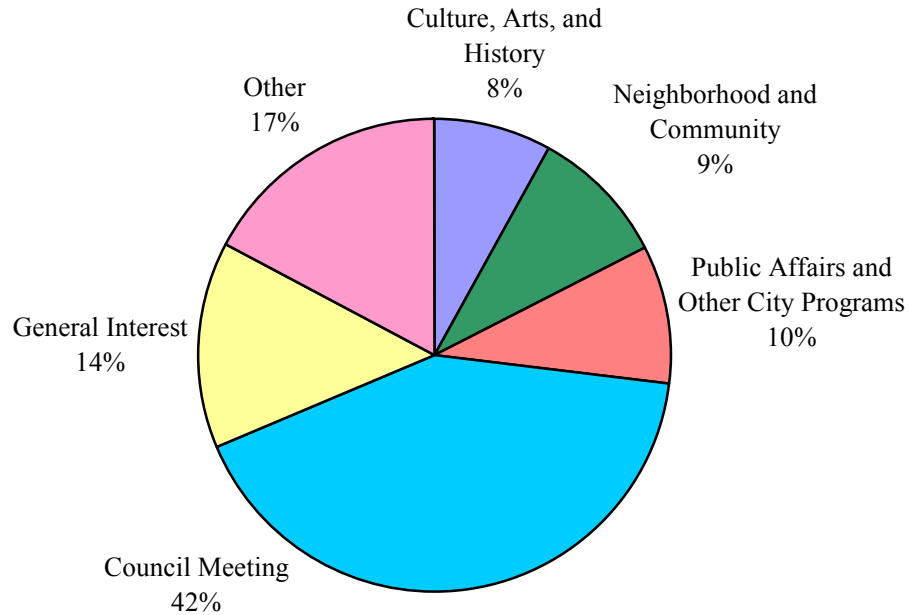
Culture, Arts, and History 8%

Other 17%

Neighborhood and Community 9%

Public Affairs and Other City Programs 10%

General Interest 14%

Council Meeting 42%

2004 AFTERNOON SAMPLE AIRTIME DISTRIBUTION

Culture, Arts, and History 11%

Other 11%

Public Affairs and Other City Programs 12%

Mayor Feature 6%

Council Meeting 34%

General Interest 26%
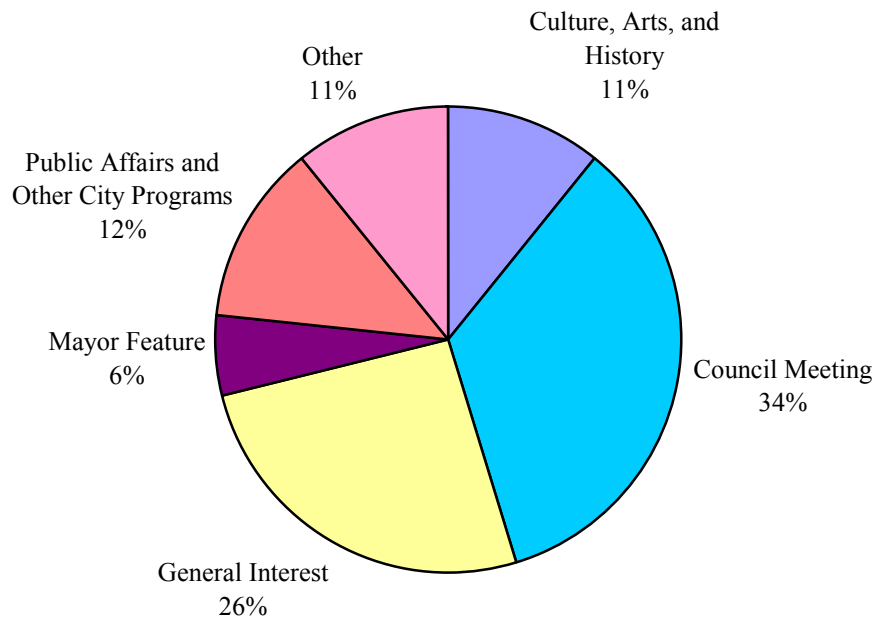
APPENDIX 2
DISTRIBUTION OF 2003 AND 2004 SAMPLE AIRTIME FOR EACH TIME PERIOD

2003 EVENING SAMPLE AIRTIME DISTRIBUTION
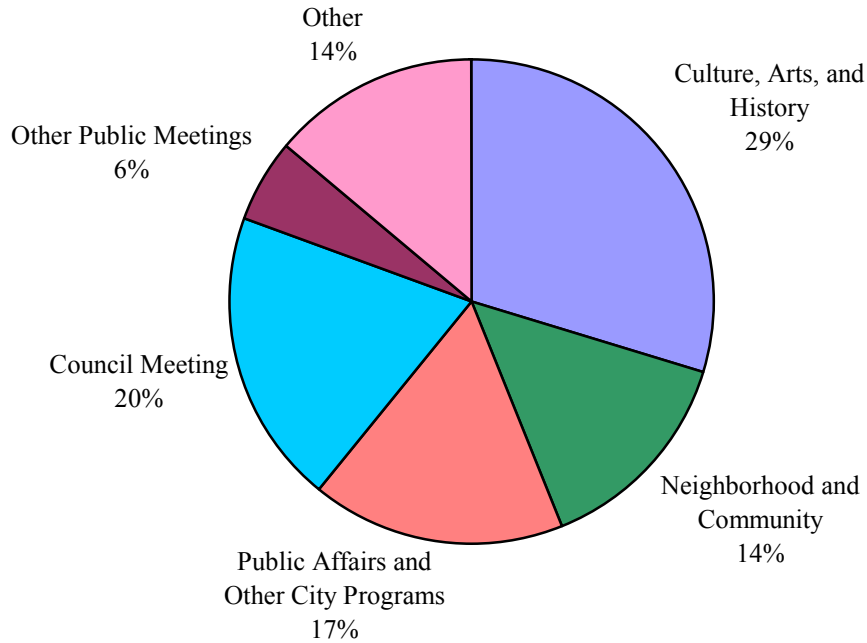
Other
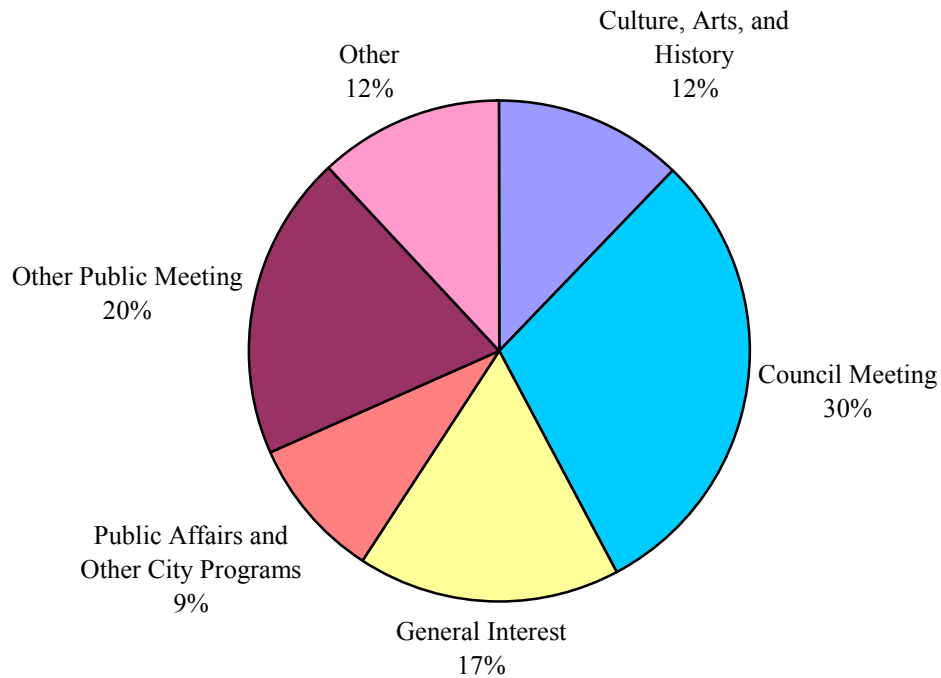14%

Other Public Meetings
6%

Council Meeting
20%

Public Affairs and
Other City Programs
17%

Culture, Arts, and
History
29%

Neighborhood and
Community
14%

2004 EVENING SAMPLE AIRTIME DISTRIBUTION

Culture, Arts, and
History
12%

Other
12%

Other Public Meeting
20%

Public Affairs and
Other City Programs
9%

General Interest
17%

Council Meeting
30%

DISTRIBUTION OF 2003 AND 2004 SAMPLE AIRTIME FOR EACH TIME PERIOD

2003 OVERNIGHT SAMPLE AIRTIME DISTRIBUTION
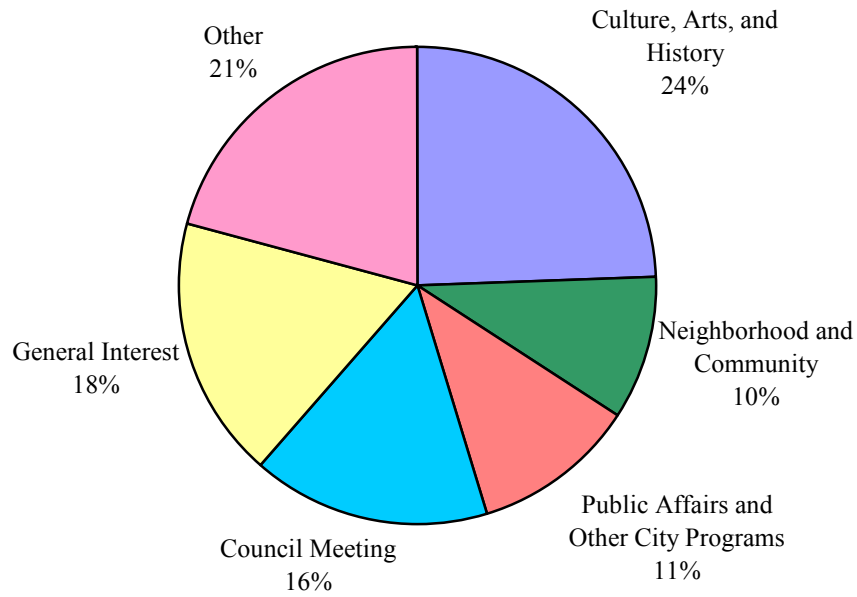
Other
21%

Culture, Arts, and
History
24%

Neighborhood and
Community
10%

Public Affairs and
Other City Programs
11%

Council Meeting
16%

General Interest
18%

2004 OVERNIGHT SAMPLE AIRTIME DISTRIBUTION

Other
7%

Culture, Arts, and
History
21%

Other Public Meeting
19%

Public Affairs and
Other City Programs
8%

General Interest
23%

Council Meeting
22%
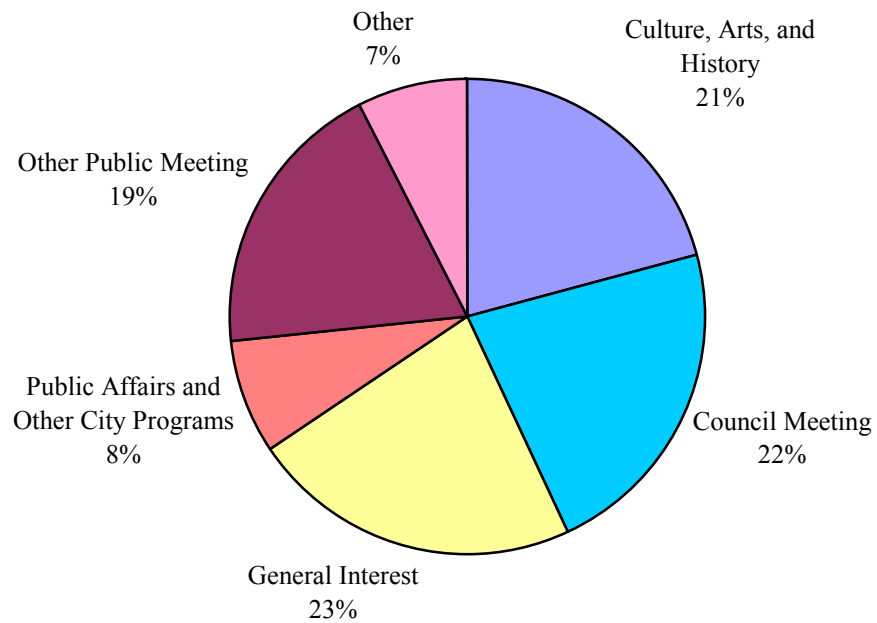
Department of Information Technology
Bill Schrier, Director and Chief Technology Officer

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 4, 2004

To: Wendy K. Soo Hoo, Office of City Auditor

From: Rona Zevin, Director, Office of Electronic Communications

Subject: *Review of Seattle Channel Programming and Scheduling Practices*

Thank you for the opportunity to review the audit report on the Seattle Channel Programming and Scheduling Practices. We are extremely proud of the high quality work that our Seattle Channel staff perform. We find that your report provides a fair and accurate assessment of that work, particularly the difficult job of providing informative, fair and balanced programming.

As you recommend, we will be documenting our procedures for making programming decisions. We agree with you that periodic viewer survey's are useful and will assess our budget towards the end of the year to determine if we have resources to conduct additional such research.

cc: Gary Gibson, General Manager, Seattle Channel
    Bill Schrier, Chief Technology Officer

Department of Information Technology
Key Tower, Suite 2700, 700 Fifth Avenue, P. O. Box 94709 Seattle, WA 98124-4709
Tel (206) 684-0600, TDD: (206) 233-7810, Fax: (206) 684-0911, http//www.seattle.gov
An equal employment opportunity, affirmative action employer. Accommodations for people with disabilities provided upon request.

Office of City Auditor's Report Evaluation Form

FAX...MAIL...CALL…
HELP US SERVE THE CITY BETTER

Our mission at the Office of City Auditor is to help assist the City in achieving honest, efficient management and full accountability throughout the City government. We service the public interest by providing the Mayor, the City Council and City managers with accurate information, unbiased analysis, and objective recommendations on how best to use public resources in support of the well-being of the citizens of Seattle.

Your feedback helps us do a better job. If you could please take a few minutes to fill out the following information for us, it will help us assess and improve our work.

* *

Report: *Review of Seattle Channel Programming and Scheduling Practices*

Release Date: February 4, 2005

Please rate the following elements of this report by checking the appropriate box:

	Too Little	**Just Right**	**Too Much**
Background Information			
Details			
Length of Report			
Clarity of Writing			
Potential Impact			

Suggestions for our report format: _____

_____

_____

Suggestions for future studies: _____

_____

Other comments, thoughts, ideas: _____

_____

_____

Name (Optional):

_____

Thanks for taking the time to help us.

Fax: 206/684-0900
E-Mail: auditor@seattle.gov
Mail: Office of City Auditor, PO Box 94729-4729, Seattle, WA 98124-4729
Call: Susan Cohen, City Auditor, 206-233-3801
www.cityofseattle.net/audit/